



U.S. Department of Justice  
United States Attorney  
District of Kansas

## NEWS RELEASE

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### PHYSICIAN AND WIFE PLEAD GUILTY IN DRUG CASE

KANSAS CITY, Kan. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that **Steven D. Ringel, 30, Overland Park**, pleaded guilty Oct. 4, 2004, before U.S. District Judge Carlos Murguia.

Ringel, who is a physician, pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to dispense a controlled substance. In his plea, he admitted that from Sept. 7, 2000, to April 7, 2004, he conspired with his wife, Amy Nicole Stepp, to dispense approximately 30,000 units of Lortab (Hydrocodone, a narcotic pain reliever) though there was no medical reason to do so. Ringel admitted that he wrote or phoned in prescriptions for Hydrocodone using various fictitious patient names. He and Stepp picked up the prescriptions at various pharmacies in the Kansas City, Kan., metropolitan area by posing as the fictitious patients.

**Amy Nicole Stepp, 32, Overland Park**, pleaded guilty Sept. 23, 2004, to one count of conspiracy to obtain a controlled substance by fraud. She faces a maximum penalty of four years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Her sentencing is set for Dec. 13.

Ringel faces a maximum penalty of 20 years in prison and a \$1 million fine. He has agreed to surrender the Drug Enforcement Administration registration that allows him to prescribe and dispense controlled substances. Sentencing is set for Dec. 13.

Melgren commended the work of the Drug Enforcement Administration, which investigated the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Marietta Parker, who prosecuted the case.